

Belmonte to release EO on disposal of ASF-tainted pork

AN executive order (EO) on the protocols for the disposal of African swine fever (ASF)-tainted meat in supermarkets will be released by the Quezon City government, Mayor Josefina Belmonte told reporters on Friday.

"I will be issuing an executive order on protocols for ensuring ASF-free meat in supermarkets," she said after meeting with supermarket executives.

The EO will include guidelines for validating and inspecting meats.

Belmonte said expenses that would be incurred during the disposal would be shouldered by supermarkets but supervised by the local government unit (LGU).

The draft of the EO will be finalized on January 15.

Belmonte clarified that the two supermarkets where ASF-tainted meat was discovered had complete docu-

mentation, including a National Meat Inspection Service certificate.

This was after city authorities discovered ASF-infected processed meat products were being sold.

Belmonte said there would be no sanctions to be imposed on the local supermarkets because they acted in "good faith."

"Cooperative *naman sila* (They are cooperative). They were in good faith, so I won't sanction them," Belmonte said.

In a statement released on Thursday, SM Cherry and one of the supermarkets

where ASF-tainted meats were found, said the source of pork came from Northstar Meat Cutting Plant and Cold Storage in Guiguinto, Bulacan.

"It was further traced back and found that the pigs came from a farm with a valid certification of free ASF status and shipping permit issued by Bureau of Animal Industry and veterinary health certificate issued by a LGU veterinarian," the supermarket said.

When questioned about the incident, the meat inspectors said they did not see any pig with

reddish polka dots (hemorrhages) during slaughtering and inspection on Dec. 13, 2019.

Belmonte refused to name the second supermarket because of an ongoing investigation.

Meanwhile, Philippine Amalgamated Supermarket Association President Steven Cua said there was a decrease in market sales of pork in the country after the ASF "scare."

"There is a perceived decrease in sales [of pork] because of the *alinlangan ng mga tao* (doubt of the people)," Cua said in an interview.

Quezon City Veterinarian Ana Marie Cabel said 20 samples of meat suspected to be tainted with ASF from 20 different supermarkets were still being tested and investigated.



EO TO DISPOSE OF ASF-TAINTED MEAT

Mayor Joy Belmonte says in a press conference on Friday that she will be issuing an executive order for disposing ASF-tainted meat after several products sold in supermarkets tested positive for the hog disease. PHOTO BY RUY L. MARTINEZ

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